

Cubitt Town Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100932
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	307529
Inspection date	15 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	348
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ed Steel
Headteacher	Ms Jacqueline Gale (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Manchester Road Isle of Dogs London E14 3NE
Telephone number	020 7987 3373
Fax number	020 7093 1018

Age group	3-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: what the school is doing to help more pupils reach the higher levels in reading and writing; creativity and enrichment within the curriculum; and the effectiveness of the present acting leadership team in moving the school forward. The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and parents' questionnaires. Discussions with staff, a governor and pupils, also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This large school with a Nursery draws pupils from the inner city. Over two thirds of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being of Bangladeshi origin. A large majority speaks English as an additional language, twenty-two different languages being spoken. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. Most of these have speech and language or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has an award for developing basic skills. For many years, it has benefited from being part of an Education Action Zone with support for enrichment activities and resources. At the time of the inspection, the school was being run by an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school provides an effective education for all its pupils. The acting headteacher has won the respect of parents, staff and pupils and is ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher. Together they have ensured that the school continues to make good progress during a period of uncertainty. Pupils achieve well from starting points in the Nursery that are well below those normally expected, and reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. This is because teaching is consistently good, with a well-planned curriculum that interests pupils.

Standards in 2007 assessments for Year 2 pupils were below average in reading and writing, with a smaller proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels. They were slightly above average in mathematics. The school has responded well by putting in place measures to improve reading and writing, which especially help more able pupils achieve to their potential. These have included focused writing sessions and a new approach to teaching letters and sounds. Partly because so many of the pupils do not speak English as a first language, they sometimes have difficulty with the more complex reading skills necessary to secure an above average score. Groups of pupils are being targeted for additional support in this area. This is effective and helps them to understand what they are expected to do in other lessons too.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils treat one another with respect and their behaviour is good. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, and work and play together harmoniously, sharing one another's festivals, such as Eid and Christmas. Pupils start the day with fifteen minutes of exercise, 'Wake and Shake', and know the advantages of living healthily. They understand about keeping safe. One said, 'You should hold your mum's hand so you don't get lost.' Pupils feel free from bullying. They enjoy school, citing especially the many trips they go on and the clubs that a large number take part in. Attendance, whilst below the national average, compares favourably with other infant schools and schools with high levels of pupils eligible for free school meals. The school recognises that more can be done to influence the very few families who persistently keep their children off school. The school council has set up an eco-team to redesign the playground and recycle paper 'so we don't waste trees.' Pupils act as buddies to new children and help around the school. Pupils attain the basic skills expected of them and are ready for the move to junior school.

The school is an attractive and colourful learning environment, enhanced by good quality photographs of the varied activities pupils enjoy, and stimulating displays of their work. The curriculum is good, imaginatively planned, with links increasingly being made between subjects. Pupils made enormous dragons to celebrate Chinese New Year, and studied the 'willow pattern' story, creating their own plate designs. Teachers are currently developing the curriculum in history and geography to make it more relevant for pupils. The curriculum is enriched well by visits to places of interest such as the National Maritime Museum, and visiting theatre groups bring cultural diversity and a range of art forms into school, including story-telling workshops and Chinese opera and dance. There is a good range of clubs for pupils in Years 1 and 2, including gymnastics, cooking and craft and stories and singing. A special 'chatterbox' club for pupils with speech and language difficulties shows parents how they can help their children at home through practising some simple exercises.

The good teaching arises from effective planning with clear objectives for learning, and work that is matched well to the needs of pupils. This enables all pupils to achieve well, including those who are learning English as an additional language. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, and make good use of opportunities to promote speaking and listening through partner work and class discussion. In one outstanding lesson, Year 2 pupils worked together to devise an electronic game that meant a bulb illuminated when a question to a story was answered correctly. They used a wide range of skills drawn not only from their scientific understanding, but also through developing their knowledge of literacy. Because pupils find the lessons interesting, they have good attitudes to learning and behave well, even those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties take a full part. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting individuals and groups of pupils, and enable the many pupils with speech and language difficulties to achieve well.

Parents fully support the school, and appreciate all it does for their children. One spoke for many in commenting, 'My child enjoys school and always learns something new each day.' The impact of the acting headteacher and senior staff is good in continuing to raise standards and achievement through careful evaluation of the school's work. They have a clear understanding of its strengths and needs and strategic plans reflect these well. Sometimes written feedback to staff is too descriptive and does not focus sufficiently on what needs to improve. Governors have supported the school well through a difficult period. Their monitoring is often rather informal and sometimes lacks a clear focus. Subject leaders have a good grasp of their areas of responsibility, and regularly observe lessons and look at books to check how well subjects are being taught. This means the school's performance is assessed by a good cross-section of staff, who contribute effectively to its improvement.

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are good, with excellent pastoral aid that benefits especially those pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. An effective range of intervention groups supports pupils who need extra help. Not all pupils on the register of special educational needs have individual education plans, as some are grouped together for assistance. The school recognises the need to ensure each pupil's individual circumstances are reflected in their plan. Academic guidance is effective, especially in literacy, so that pupils are clear about what they can do to improve their reading and writing. Marking consistently shows pupils how to achieve this.

The school has made good progress since its last inspection, especially in supporting more able pupils in mathematics and science, and in developing religious education. The present leadership team are helping the school to maintain this improvement, and the school's capacity to improve is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in spacious and attractive classrooms in the Nursery and Reception, with very well equipped modern outdoor spaces to enjoy. The Foundation Stage curriculum is effective, and captures children's imaginations through a good mixture of adult-led and child-selected activities both inside and outside. There are extensive role-play areas where children can develop their social and language skills. Children cooperate together well, as when they were making kites together. The Foundation Stage is led well and good guidance is given to new teachers in the Reception classes.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in literacy by developing pupils' higher-order reading skills further.
- Improve attendance by working with those families whose children are absent most.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

03 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cubitt Town Infants' School, London, E14 3NE

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. I enjoyed finding out your views. I agree that yours is a good school and it is getting better all the time. Here are some of things I like about it.

- Your school is a very attractive place with lots of exciting displays of work.
- You make good progress in your studies.
- You work and play together sensibly and your behaviour is good.
- Your lessons are interesting and fun.
- You go on a good many trips and have plenty of clubs to enjoy.
- The school cares for you well, especially when you have a problem.
- The school is led well by the acting headteacher and her staff.

Most of you attend school well, but a few of you are away too much. I have asked the school to make sure your parents know how important it is that you do not miss school. Some of you find it more difficult to understand what is happening when you are reading a story, especially those of you who are learning to speak English. Your teachers are finding ways to help you do your best so that your reading and writing continues to improve. Perhaps you could tell them the kind of stories you enjoy reading.

Thank you once again for your help. My best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt

Lead Inspector